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ANDREA MILANA
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G.I. JOE
image
#23

ENERGON UNIVERSE

CODENAME:

G.I. JOE

[MISSION LOG [04.023.01]

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BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG
POLICE
YOU WILL PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID TO US, RISK.
SPT
SPT
SPT
SPT
POLICE
FINE, BULLETS DON'T WORK. #5%@ IT.
TIME TO KNUCKLE UP...

POW!
POLICE
CRACK SOME GHOSTS WIDE OPEN!
SNAP!

WELL, ISN'T THAT A TREAT? D.I.R.E. TECH WORKS...

POW

BUT RISK HAS NO ISSUE FIGHTING THE D.I.R.E. CONSTRUCTS. MAYBE I'M NOT GOING DEEP ENOUGH INTO THE DARKNESS OF HIS MIND...THE FEARS HE HIDES...
PERHAPS IT'S TIME...

SLAM!

TO CHANGE THE GAME...

THE ZOMBIES ARE FADING AWAY, BUT SO IS THE HALLWAY...

IT'S TAKING ME SOME PLACE ELSE.
WHAT--
THE--?

MY FAMILY'S ESTATE. BUT IT'S **NOT.**

WHAT KIND OF HELL IS THIS?

AND WHERE THE HELL ARE G.I. JOE AND COBRA?

TK.

CATCH!
HOW DID YOU ESCAPE THOSE GLOWING CREATURES, BARONESS?
THAT'S FOR ME TO KNOW AND FOR YOU TO NEVER FIND OUT, DESTRO.
I'M SURE THAT MEANS SOMETHING TO CHAMELEON.
I APPRECIATE RESOURCEFULNESS IN A WOMAN.
WHAT SHE BELIEVES DOES NOT HELP ME IN THIS MOMENT.
NOT MUCH WILL.

PERHAPS.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
IN SCOTLAND, WE WOULD HEAR WILD TALES OF ANASTASIA CISAROVNA.
YOU ARE A LEGEND IN MY COMMUNITY.
I'M SURPRISED YOU WOULD WASTE YOUR TALENTS WITH G.I. JOE.
BUT I WOULD RATHER SURVIVE BY YOUR SIDE THAN FIGHT TODAY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WE TEAM UP?
WHY SHOULD I TRUST YOU?
YOU CAN'T...BUT I REFUSE TO DIE HERE. I'M SUGGESTING A TEMPORARY ALLIANCE. TO SURVIVE WHATEVER HORROR WE FIND OURSELVES IN.
WE LOCATE OUR ALLIES, AND THEN GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. IF THE WAR BEGINS AGAIN, SO BE IT.
DEAL?
IT CAN BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
BUT THE MOMENT WE FIND OUR PEOPLE...

...IT'S OVER.

HELLO?

HE'S SUCH A TROUBLEMAKER.

A BULLY.
THE BOY CAN'T STOP GETTING INTO FIGHTS.
HE'S SO THIN SKINNED. TAKES EVERYTHING SO PERSONAL.
HE DIDN'T GET THAT FROM MY SIDE OF THE FAMILY.
MY SIDE COULDN'T HAVE BIRTHED SUCH A CREATURE OF VIOLENCE.
HE LIKES HURTING PEOPLE.
THE SCHOOL KICKED HIM OUT AGAIN.
NONE OF THE SCHOOLS WILL TAKE HIM. NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE PAY THEM.
THEY SAID BASED ON HIS HISTORY, IT WOULD BE TOO MUCH OF A RISK.
NO ONE WANTS HIM.
HE'S A LOST CAUSE.

THERE HE IS. MY BOY. MY GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT.
YOU'RE JUST USELESS, YOU KNOW THAT? WE HAD SUCH HIGH HOPES FOR YOU.
BUT YOU JUST WOULDN'T STOP FIGHTING.
ITS WORKING. HE'S BREAKING DOWN.
BUT IF I WANT TO KNOW RISK'S TRUE FEARS AND MISSION... PERHAPS I MUST UP THE ANTE.
GIVE HIM SOMETHING A BIT MORE REAL TO FIGHT.

I SHOULD HAVE DISCIPLINED YOU MORE, BOY.
YOU ALWAYS JUMPED BEFORE YOU LOOKED, AND IT ALWAYS GOT YOU IN TROUBLE.
THAT'S NOT TRUE, DAD. I ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT MY ACTIONS... HOW THEY COULD GO BAD...
FWWASSHH
BUT EVERYTHING YOU TOUCH GOES BAD!
NO, NO, NO, NO....
WAIT...
A CAGE? YOU THINK I'M AFRAID OF A CAGE?
THERE'S NO PLACE WHERE I FEEL MORE AT HOME.
SO, GO AHEAD! THROW WHATEVER GHOST AT ME YOU WANT!
I'LL PUNCH EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM RIGHT IN THEIR DAMN FACE.

KRAK!
I'M NO GHOST.
MERCER?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WHATEVER THIS PLACE IS... YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE TORTURE IT'S BEEN PUTTING ME THROUGH, MAN.
IF BEATING THE CRAP OUT OF YOU WILL GET ME OUT OF THIS NIGHTMARE...
I'M READY FOR A NEW ROUND!
"HOW HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO SNEAK AROUND UNDETECTED?"

I SUSPECT OUR HOST IS DISTRACTED.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? SOME KIND OF EXPERIMENT USING...
ENERGON. A LOT OF IT.
HOW DID THIS GET HERE?
COBRA COMMANDER BELIEVES THERE ARE DEPOSITS ALL OVER THE WORLD. HIDDEN FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS. THEY JUST NEED TO BE UNCOVERED AND HARVESTED.
HAWK KNEW THERE WAS ENERGON HERE, TOO.
BUT DID HE ALSO KNOW SOMEONE WAS RUNNING EXPERIMENTS ON IT? THIS IS A LOT OF TECH AND RESOURCES. SOMEONE HAD TO PAY FOR IT...
I SUSPECT THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT KNOW OF YOUR TASKMASTER AND THE GAME HE IS PLAYING.
AT LEAST, THAT IS THE IMPRESSION I HAD AFTER HE AGREED TO MEET WITH ME.
YOU MET WITH COLONEL HAWK?
AAAHHH!
IT'S COMING FROM THIS WAY!

AAAAHHHHH!!
WHAT IS IT DOING?!
CLEARLY, IT'S TORTURING THEM.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CALM WHEN IT'S HURTING HER?
BECAUSE I KNOW ASTORIA CAN TAKE IT.
WHATEVER THIS TECH IS...I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
WHAT HAPPENS IF I JUST YANK IT OFF STALKER?
IT COULD KILL THEM...
WE NEED TO FIND WHOEVER PLUGGED THEM INTO THESE MACHINES...

KRAK!
KRAK!
THUNK!
FIGHTING EACH OTHER IS A WASTE OF TIME, MERCER!
WHATEVER THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE...IT'S USING MY PAST TO TRY TO KILL ME.
THEN... USE...YOUR PAST... TO FIGHT BACK...
HOLY CRAP, YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU BIG DUMMY.
I KNOW WHAT SCARES ME. I'LL FOCUS ON THAT...

->CHOKE<-
THAT'S BETTER.
YOU'RE AFRAID OF DEAD BODIES?
NO. THIS IS MY FAILURE.
I WAS WRONG. I MISCALCULATED...
AND LIVED.

I WAS ON MY FIRST FIELD MISSION WITH MY TEAM. I THOUGHT I KNEW THE RISKS.
BUT I WAS WRONG.
AND THAT WASN'T A SECRET.
EVERYONE KNEW. THEY WANTED TO SEND ME HOME.
BUT I BEGGED. I'D GO ANYWHERE ELSE. DEEP UNDERCOVER. WARZONES. WHATEVER.
I HAD TO MAKE UP FOR WHAT I DID.
THAT'S IT?! AND THEN YOU WHAT...JOINED G.I. JOE?
NOT AT ALL. I TOOK ON DANGEROUS MISSIONS SO NO ONE ELSE HAD TO.
I SAW THINGS...I DID THINGS, THAT IF THE REST OF G.I. JOE EVER KNEW...
HA.
I'M STARTING TO LIKE YOU, BUDDY... YOU'RE A REAL MESS.
BUT AT LEAST YOU KNOW HOW TO THROW A PUNCH.

AH!
GET IT OFF ME, GET IT OFF ME!
IT WON'T LET GO!
SMACK!

CRASH!
I'VE SEEN ENOUGH, RISK. YOU'VE PROVEN MY D.I.R.E. TECH IS A SUCCESS.
IT USES ENERGON TO MAKE YOUR NIGHTMARES A REALITY. AN AMAZING INTERROGATION TOOL.
THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WISH TO STEAL IT FROM ME.
THE PEOPLE WHO SENT YOU.
BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME AN OPPORTUNITY.

FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF EXPERIMENT.
I KNOW YOUR SECRETS. I KNOW YOUR FEARS.
AND IF YOU DON'T TELL ME WHO SENT YOU AND WHY...
I WILL USE THEM TO KILL YOU.

STRAIGHT SHOOTERS

DIRECT ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: GIJOE@SKYBOUND.COM

What another killer issue! I wouldn't mind seeing Mercer and Risk start a paranormal investigation agency together after this issue. Joining me in answering letters, as always, is New York Times bestselling writer Joshua Williamson!

I also like the chemistry between Risk and Mercer. I'll have to find ways to bring them together again. In the meantime, I hope you're enjoying our horror arc that also gives some insight into the man known as RISK. Andrea is killing it with the horror in these issues. How cool looking is Crystal Ball on that last page?!

Let's open the mailbag!

Dear Joe Team,

I loved issue 21. I liked the homage to the original #21 being that it was mostly silent. After reading the story I thought, "Huh, no surprise twist this issue." Then I read it again and wondered. Who is that ninja that helped Cobra Commander? Is the twist staring me right in the face? Were we given a hint of a certain silent commando's origins? That ninja appeared to be female, but where did she learn to fight like that? I wonder.

Keep up the good work.
Jason

I like where your mind goes, Jason, but the woman helping Cobra Commander wasn't a ninja, she is part of his elite Valkyries unit!

Yup! And you'll see more of her as the story builds! Big plans for her!

Glad you enjoyed the silent #21!

Hello Joshua Williamson, Ben Abernathy, Tom Reilly, Andrea Milana, and all of the wonderful people bringing G.I. Joe into the Energon Universe. I know it's been a while since my last letter; life happens. However, I was pleased to see it was printed, and I was satisfied with the responses. No, I'm not just using the letters pages to shamelessly promote my favorite G.I. Joe Podcasts like Talking Joe, Joe On Joe Podcast, What's On Joe Mind, and Plastic Profiles. I do appreciate hearing interviews from the creative teams on those podcasts whenever they happen. Anyway, on to the meat & potatoes of the letter. Man, these recent issues of G.I. Joe have been great, from the revelation that Zartan, the Master of Disguise, was posing as Hawk during the Dreadnok War, which will have me guessing how long Zartan was pretending to be Hawk. Was he posing as Hawk in Duke?

We'll explain this more in the upcoming G.I. Joe vs Night Force arc that begins in G.I. JOE #25. You'll get more info on Zartan and when he took over.

Then we finally have the long-awaited meeting between Duke and Optimus, notably just Optimus, not Optimus Prime. Which you wouldn't be expecting unless you were reading Transformers as well as G.I. Joe. I couldn't help but think about the Invincible Universe as a parallel where, if you weren't reading Invincible at the same time, you weren't reading Guarding the Globe and other Invincible titles, it wouldn't make sense as to why Bulletproof is all of a sudden Invincible in Guarding the Globe. Reading Transformers gives you the added context of the Matrix being passed onto Elita One to become Elita Prime, just like Invincible provides the added context of Invincible getting the Scourge Virus and losing his power, so Bulletproof takes over the mantle. I know I love Invincible as much as I love G.I. Joe. Needless to say, I love the meeting between Duke & Optimus and hope to see more of the two leaders working together in the future.

Great! Thank you! Glad that worked for you! I wanted to make sure the events of TF were reflected and helped us align where we are in the EU story.

Then that brings us to the return of Scarlett and the Arashikage Clan, boy, I loved that we got a mostly silent issue for issue 21. The most reading of text I needed to do was the exposition blurbs from Cover Girl & Snow Job, which read more like emails. The ninja action in that issue was amazing. I loved seeing Scarlett, Jinx, Storm Shadow, and the Hard Master fight a bunch of Cobra Soldiers and Cobra Valkyries. Of course, the Arashikage Clan's Energon Sword is stolen, setting up exciting things to come. I have a feeling a certain Alpha Commando is arriving soon, given these events. I know you can't reveal when Snake Eyes is coming because that would ruin the surprise, so I'll just say I hope to see him soon. I do wonder when we'll see Flint and Night Force again.

Sincerely,
Scotty

Thank you for the letter and support, Scotty! And Flint and Night Force are coming in a BIG way starting with #25…

be ready!

Tom really killed it with the art, action, and storytelling in #21, didn't he?!

I looked back at the original and saw they used a bit of green text on black with Destro at the very start and used that, too. So, mostly silent. Haha. But it was fun revisiting that piece of the Energon Universe.

Hello Skybound,

Loving the series, loving the EU. Two questions:

At the bottom of #21 p. 6, we see a symbol different from the usual Arashikage hexagram. Mistake or new faction? In the old ARAH series, the Onihashi swordsmith family had its own hexagram, so I figured this could be such a case...

I think it's the same logo we've seen, just the wind was causing the flag to fold and look different. BUT I like what you're thinking here and that could be fun to explore.

Also, I noticed your mission log numbers on the inside covers... #21 was [04.21.01]. Is the following interpretation correct?

The 04 refers to the 4th story arc. Then comes the issue number (here 21). Then comes 01, which is the volume number?

Thanks for confirming or correcting my interpretation and here's to your continued success!
Luc

Thank you for reading and supporting our title, Luc! The 01 stands for "first printing". So, if/when we reprint #21, it'll switch to 04.021.02. You were close!

Yo Ben & Josh!

What an absolute treat issue 21 was! Any time Tom Reilly returns to G.I. Joe, it is a delight! The silent issue is a well worn Joe trope at this point, but this issue delivered 20 pages of awesome which surpassed my high expectations from Josh and Tom. While it was a shame not to have the dream team with Jordie Bellaire on colours, Lee Loughridge did a stand up job. The final panel of the book left a lingering impression on me. In the original ARAH 21, the final panel revealed a mysterious red tattoo that served as the set up of a mythology which defined G.I. Joe for years to come. Here we see through a Valkyrie's battle damaged visor; striking red eyes. What does it mean? Could it be related to Cobra Commander's body horror giant test tube experimentation? I look forward to the reveal of this particular mystery in issues to come (hopefully also drawn by Tom Reilly!).

Mark

Thank you for the letter, Mark! You won't have to wait long to find out more about that Valkyrie…keep reading!

We debated a LOT if this should be a silent issue. It somewhat came down to thinking of myself as a reader. If it had not been silent, I would have been disappointed as a reader, so I knew as the writer I couldn't not do it. I had to. Also, it was an opportunity to show how amazing Tom is. And yeah, this issue introduced a subplot with the Valkyrie and her connections to Cobra Commander that will play out over the next year.

To the G.I. Joe team,

I want to thank you for writing this series, I've loved G.I. Joe ever since my dad showed me the original run when I was a kid. I started reading this a little late but I've been in love with it since. Do you guys have any plans with Firefly?

Thank you for writhing
Nicholas

Thank you for the letter, Nicholas, and we glad to have you aboard!

Dude, I think about Firefly daily. I'm not 100% sure when he'll be brought in, but I'm hopeful for soon. He's one of my favs characters in G.I. Joe. I'm dying to write him.

And that's a wrap! See you in a month for the sense-shattering end to this horror arc!

-Ben

Next issue is NUTS. It's gets scary and then deadly! Get ready for some twists and turns! This whole arc that started with #19 has been driving to the end of the next issue and into our next arc.

Thank you to everyone who wrote in and for reading our G.I. JOE series!

-Joshua

ENERGON EXPERIENCE

Zombies, monsters, and...a Baroness and Destro team-up?! This short horror arc is packing a wallop and is going to have people buzzing about the future implications. For the time being, though, I hope everyone enjoyed seeing Risk choke out Mercer!

Ben!

Ben Abernathy, Executive Editor

CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

WHO: Mercer

Cobra Viper Leader

WHAT: Mercer is the former head of M.A.R.S. Security and now leads Cobra's elite Viper battalion. Ruthless and strong, Mercer's loyalty to Destro remains absolute and he personally handles any sensitive missions his master assigns.

RISK IT ALL!

A man of mystery and violence, Crystal Ball is weaponizing Risk's past against him. Whether it be his first failed mission with the C.I.A. or a complicated history with his parents, it starts to make sense why he only truly feels at home in a cage!

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Q: I have a spooky question this month for artist Andrea Milana: What horror would Crystal Ball summon to torment you?

A: Man, I'd love to answer "an undeadline," but all jokes aside, if I were to give a serious answer, it would probably involve my old elementary school, full of nuns. What a terrible experience, hahaha!

THE ENERGON UNIVERSE CHECKLIST

- ☐ MASK #1 AVAILABLE 6/10
- ☐ TRANSFORMERS #33 AVAILABLE 6/10
- ☐ G.I. JOE #23 AVAILABLE 6/17
- ☐ VOID RIVALS #31 AVAILABLE 6/24

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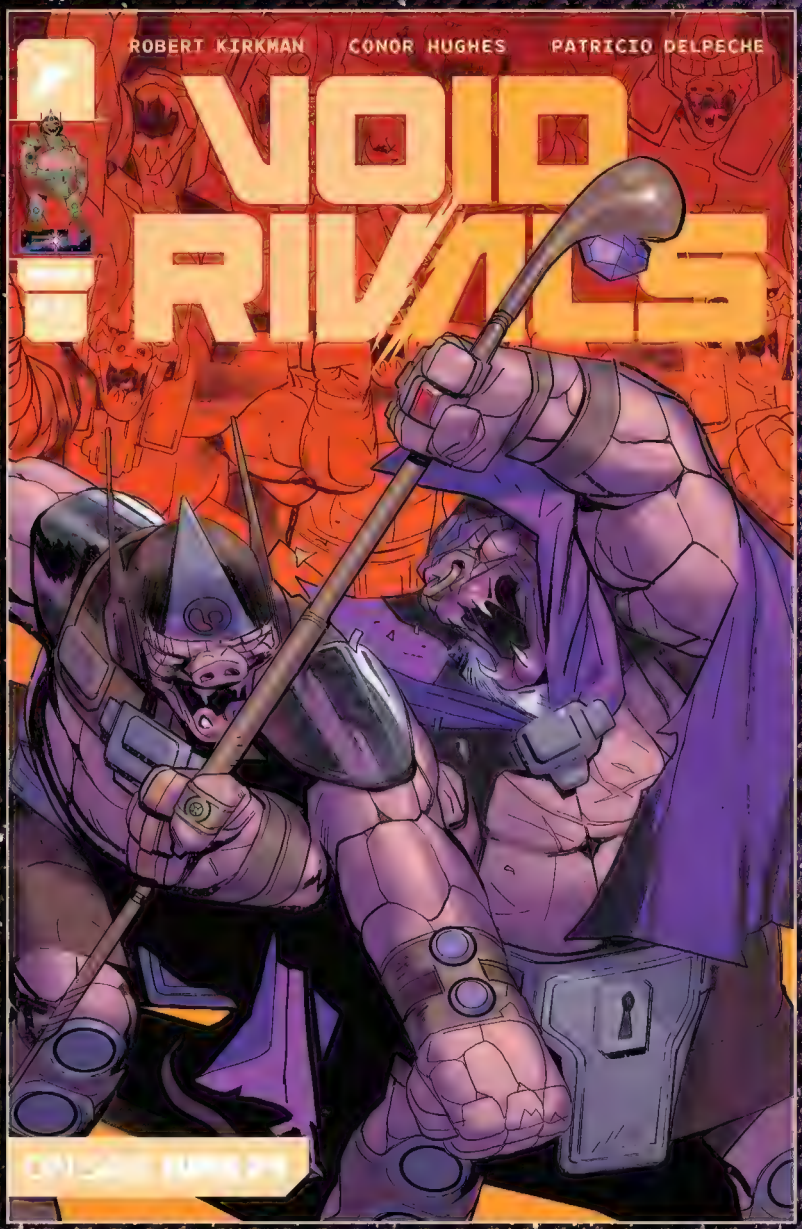

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PYE PARR
PIERLUIGI CASOLINO
MASK
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image
#02
ON SALE JULY 8

TRANSFORMERS
image
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D.N.A
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JOSHUA WILLIAMSON
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image
#24
ON SALE JULY 15

Secrets revealed as Joe battles Joe in this DOUBLE-SIZED anniversary issue!

G.I. JOE

#25

WILLIAMSON REILLY MILANA LOUGHRIDGE

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?
AUGUST 2026

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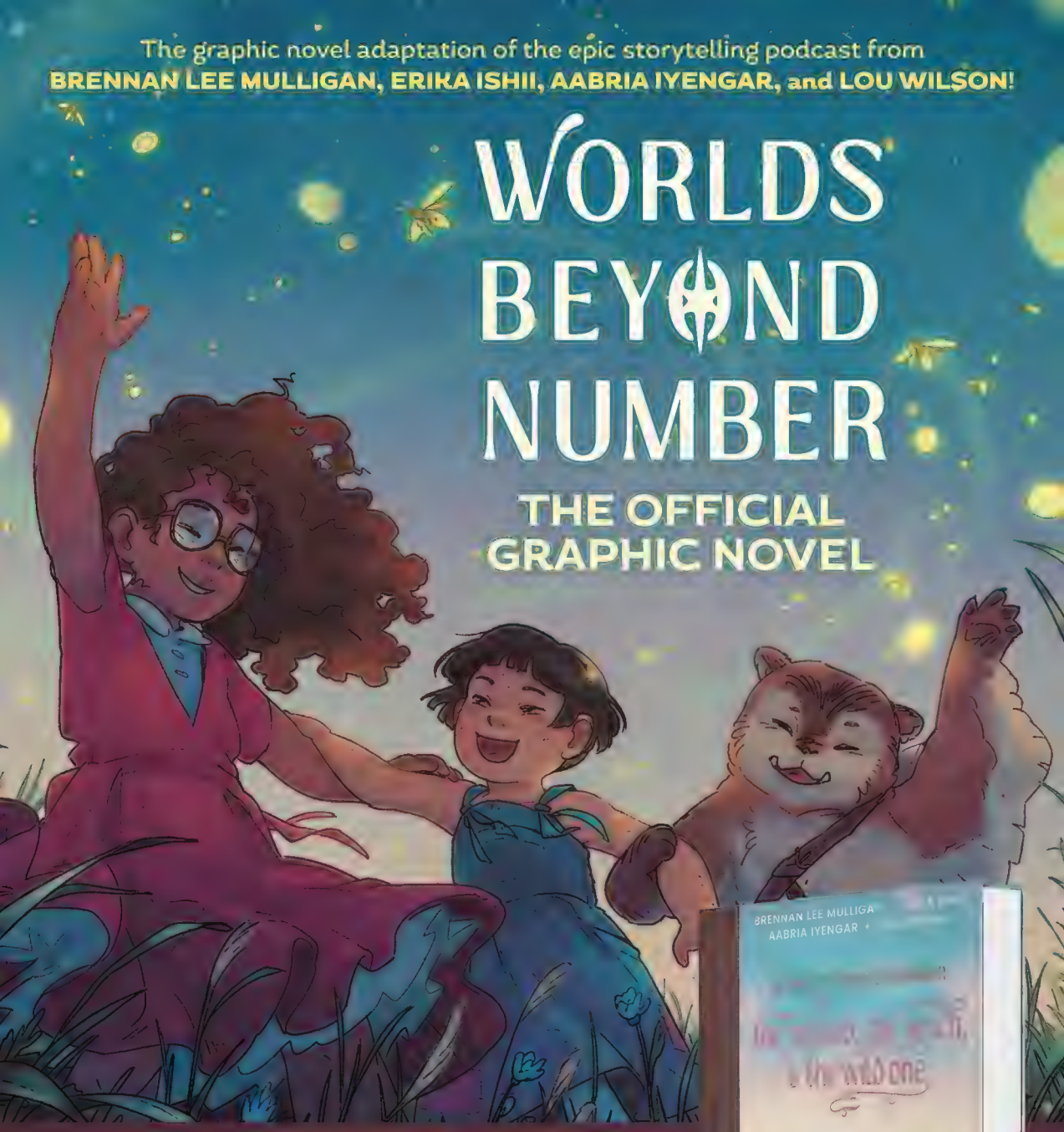

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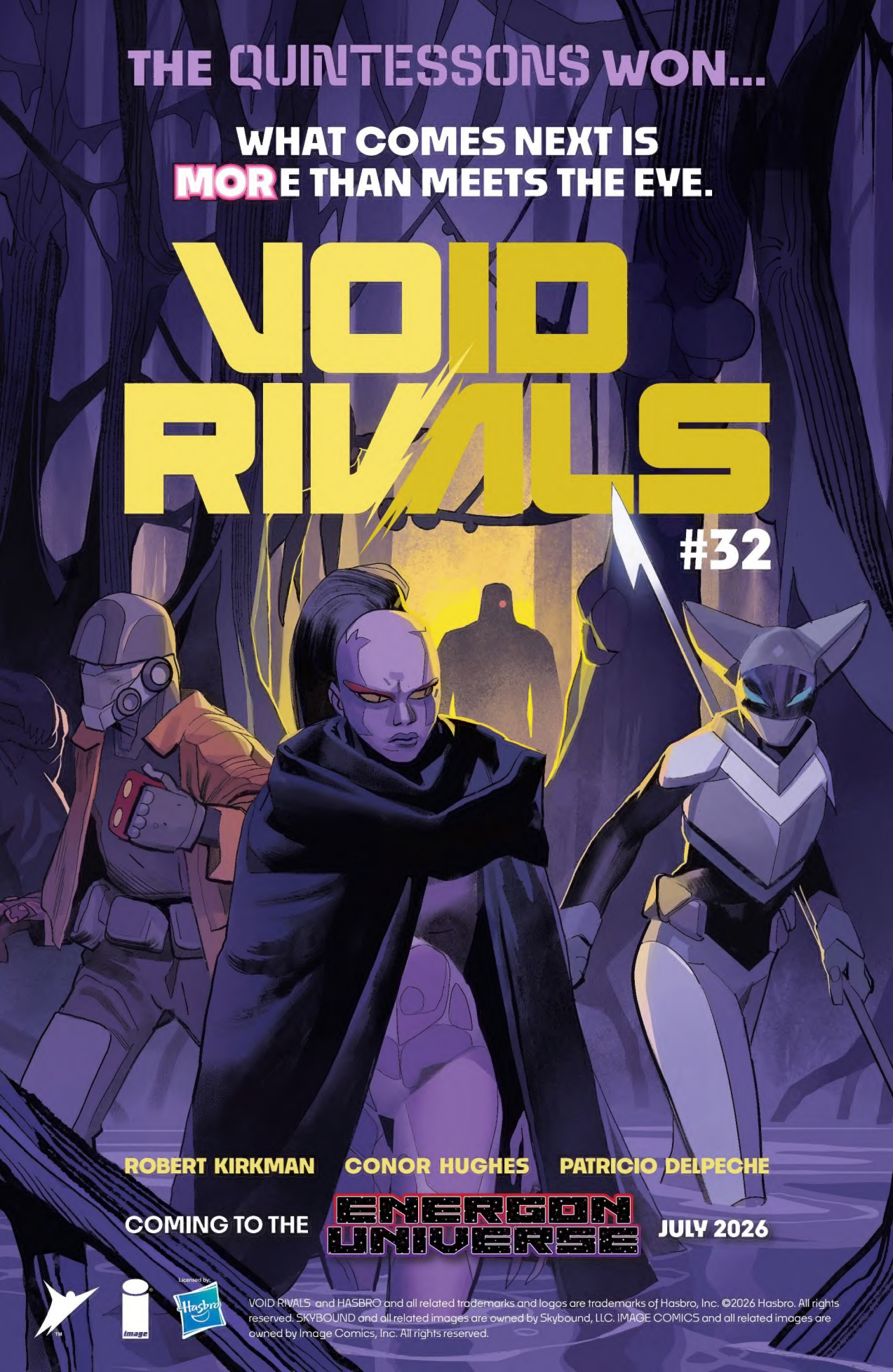

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FIRST THERE WAS

THE WALKING DEAD™

THEN CAME

INVINCIBLE™

AND THEN

ENERGON UNIVERSE

WE WERE JUST WARMING UP.

TERMINAL™

KIRKMAN CASEY KUBERT FINCH ADAMS

ON SALE JULY 2026

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